

Governor, Justices and Child Protection Services to talk about foster parent needs

September 8, 2016

Gov. Phil Bryant, Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr., Justice Dawn Beam and Child Protection Services Director Dr. David Chandler will talk about the need for more foster parents during a Rescue 100 Vision meeting at 10 a.m. Friday, Sept. 9 at the Gartin Justice Building at 450 High Street in Jackson.

Rescue 100 is a collaborative effort among government, the faith-based community and the private sector to train more foster parents to take care of abused and neglected children. Pastors, judges and others interested in efforts to address the foster parent shortage are invited to attend.

There are 1,096 children in foster care in Attala, Hinds, Holmes, Issaquena, Leake, Madison, Rankin, Scott, Sharkey, Warren and Yazoo counties. There are currently 272 licensed resource homes in those same counties, according to Chris Alexander, spokesperson for the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services.

The meeting on Friday will focus on the need for more foster parents and future plans to address that need. The goal of Rescue 100 is to provide 100 more licensed foster homes to meet the needs of abused and neglected children in Central Mississippi.

Justice Beam, chair of the Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice, is spearheading organization of Rescue 100 programs to train foster parents. "We have a tremendous need for loving foster homes for our children. This is an exciting effort working with the courts, local child protection staff, non-profit organizations and local churches to wrap their arms around our children and their families," she said.

Jamie Walley, director of Church Relations and Training for the adoption agency 200 Million Flowers, is expected to talk about Rescue 100's vision to recruit and train more foster parents. Walley and his wife Stephanie are licensed foster parents. Walley is student and missions pastor at Meadow Grove Baptist Church in Brandon.

Rescue 100 will hold its third weekend intense training for prospective foster parents Oct. 21-23 at Mississippi College in Clinton. Residents of Attala, Hinds, Holmes, Issaquena, Leake, Madison, Rankin, Scott, Sharkey, Warren and Yazoo counties are invited to participate.

Four orientations are scheduled before the training so that people considering becoming licensed foster parents can learn the requirements. Anyone interested in attending the weekend training must first attend an orientation. People may register at www.200millionflowers.org/rescue100.

Each of the one-hour orientation sessions is scheduled for 6 p.m. Dates and locations are:

- Oct. 10, Canton, Madison Chancery Courthouse, Board of Supervisors Room, 146 West Center Street;
- Oct. 11, Jackson, Hinds Chancery Courthouse, 316 South President Street;
- Oct. 12, Vicksburg, Warren Chancery Courtroom, 1009 Cherry Street;
- Oct. 13, Brandon, Rankin County Circuit Courtroom, 215 East Government Street.

The Rescue 100 program began at Michael Memorial Baptist Church in Gulfport. The first mass training was conducted there in April. A second was held in July in Hattiesburg.

"We started in south Mississippi and we are working our way through the state," Dr. Chandler said. "The previous two Rescue 100 events were very successful in bolstering the number

of available foster homes both in the Pine Belt and on the Coast of Mississippi. MDCPS is excited to once again partner with our affiliates to work towards licensing even more foster parents so that we can better serve the children of Central Mississippi."

Every foster home must be licensed. Completing the licensing process used to take many months, with individual classes scheduled weekly. In an effort to address the need for more foster parents, Rescue 100 will pack into three days all the classes required for people to be licensed as foster parents. Child Protection Services or a private agency will follow up with complete home studies shortly afterwards.

Rescue 100 is a collaborative effort of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services; the Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice; and adoption agencies including 200 Million Flowers, Mississippi Children's Home Services and Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth. Area churches are invited to join the effort.

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